

Dec. 21, 1975

Harold Weisberg  
Frederick, Md.

Dear Mr. Weisberg:

I have read several books in your Whitewash series and found them very provoking.

I do not know if you have covered this in your writing, but one subject I find very intriguing is the role of the press in the JFK assassination and its aftermath.

Through the dozen years since the murder, the press has stood solidly behind the Warren Commission and the lone assassin theory, even as the evidence began to pile up heavily on the other side. By the press I mean the national newsmagazines, the large daily newspapers and the TV networks. Of course the doubts were raised in some magazines leaning to the left.

But the great majority of the press pushed the lone assassin and magic bullet theories. Life Magazine bought the Zapruder film and would not allow it to be reproduced. Even today, when a magazine like the Saturday Evening Post calls for a reopening of the investigation, Time in its Nov. 24 issue is still playing the same old broken record.

A reasonable man who reads the Warren Report, its critics and its defenders is forced, at the very least, to realize that the commission failed to pursue many valuable leads. A less trusting but still reasonable man could draw the conclusion that the commission reached its verdict in the first few weeks and deliberately covered up a conspiracy.

Reporters who work for large newspapers and TV networks are, for the most part, reasonable men of greater than average intellectual curiosity. The question, then, which I cannot answer is why have they been muzzled for the past 12 years?

Freedom of the press is a very touchy subject for most editors and reporters; they are indignant if this right is infringed on in the slightest. How is it possible, then, that the vast majority of them were persuaded or coerced into backing the commission?

Immediately the tactics of J. Edgar Hoover come to mind. Could there have been blackmail? This man possessed files with negative information on many powerful people in the country. Could he have threatened to blackmail a host of key news executives if they pursued the story?

This hardly seems likely. The editors I have known have been fighters and any effort to intimidate them often brought about the undesired

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reaction. Besides, a threat of blackmail from the FBI would have made a bombshell of a story in itself.

More likely, the press was made to believe that pursuit of the facts in the JFK murder would be harmful to "national security," a phrase that has received much use in the past several years. Perhaps they were made to believe that, indeed, there was a conspiracy, that Oswald did have ties with Castro and the U.S.S.R. and that any attempt to probe this could lead to World War III.

This seems possible, since it is reported that Johnson said this shortly before his death. Whether he believed it or not is another question.

Oswald has U.S. intelligence stamped all over him. Yet beyond the initial story that he may have been an FBI informer very little probing has been done in this area by the establishment press. Even now, when the crimes of the CIA and FBI are becoming known, we still read nothing in the daily newspaper about Oswald's intelligence ties.

Here the World War III theory seems to fall on its face. Perhaps most of the press was aware that the murder was probably a coup d'etat and that pursuit of the story could well lead to civil war and tremendous economic loss, as well as the end of the United States of America.

This last is most plausible but it too is very shaky. There are many newsmen whose idealism far exceeds national or economic barriers. I simply cannot answer the question of why Time (Nov. 24) is still backing the lone assassin and "magic bullet" theories.

I find it more astounding that seven out of the ten letters to the editor they published backed Time and the commission. Is this the same percentage of favorable letters in the total received?

They did not print my letter. I told them that, along with the FBI and CIA, Time's credibility was becoming increasingly shaky. For if a federal agency fails to tell the truth to the public in one or two very grave matters, can they be believed in anything?

At least in the JFK assassination stories and probably in others, the press, by quoting lies or failing to dig out the truth, has been rewriting history, in the fashion of Orwell's Newspeak. The evidence ties Oswald with U.S. intelligence; the press says no, he was a loner and a crack shot.

Despite this, the truth is slowly leaking out in books like yours ~~and other~~ and other reasonable critics.

Also interesting are a host of recent books containing a grain of truth and a great deal of misinformation. Among them are George O'Toole's The Assassination Tapes, Charles Ashman's The CIA-Mafia Link, and Hugh McDonald's Appointment in Dallas.

O'Toole believes Oswald innocent but fails to link him with the

CIA. Ashman believes him guilty, says Castro may have hired him to kill Kennedy in revenge for the CIA-Mafia attempts on his own life. McDonald, a former CIA agent, interviews the "actual" killer of JFK, a professional killer who at one time had tenuous ties with the CIA.

These books are not important for what they say but for why they are saying what they are. Each of them comes closer to what I believe is the truth but still attempts to misdirect the public's attention from several very touchy areas.

This has been a long letter but I feel very strongly that the public has been deceived by the news media for a long time. I would like to know your opinion as to why this has happened. In many ways this is a crime almost as great as the assassination itself, leading to public mistrust of its national leaders and the media.

The people will have the truth about the murder of JFK if we have to dig it out for ourselves.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,

*Robert Braun*

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Dear Mr. Braun,

12/24/75

Not knowing which of my books you have and phlebitis limit the response/ I can make to you thoughtful 12/21.

I address the press in the second, third, fourth and fifth books, the fifth not part of the Whitewash series (flyer enclosed).

There is proof of some of your beliefs in Post Mortem, including the official records on them.

Reporters, TV nets: simplest answer policy, holding jobs.

Hoover is addressed with specific and once TOP SECRET evidence in WW IV and Post Mortem.

I do not have and do not intend to buy Ashman's book from some of his articles I'd say he is commercializing a hot subject in an irresponsible way. O'Toole's is a formula book combined with ripoff. Worthless. McDonald's is a total fabrication.

I agree with your indignation about the press, share it, suffer from it, and do what little I can about it.

Best Wishes,

Harold Weisberg